the hart house music magazine
demo
featuring
Mocky
Music in Cinema
Hip-Hop and Homosexuality
IsKwé
Toronto Live Music Scene
& more
weaves
issue xiv
february 2018

demo
the hart house music magazine
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staff letters

john monahan, hart house warden

For several years now, *demo* magazine has been written by student members of Hart House's Music Committee, one of the 10 standing committees of Hart House's Board of Stewards. Together, they help to bring life to the University of Toronto's principal place for students to enhance and expand their educational experience outside of the classroom. Hart House offers students the opportunity to come together, across their many differences, to forge new communities of interest focused on the arts, dialogue and wellness. Music has always been, and today remains, one of the most popular and effective means of facilitating that process.

This edition of *demo* considers the evolution of the music scene in Toronto as the city itself grows and diversifies. In recent years, it has been exciting to see the advent of a number of alternative performance spaces across the city and to see old ones increasingly disrupted through the creative re-imaginings of a whole new generation of artists. This drive towards increased access to and democratization of performance spaces is also reflected in the innovative ways in which artists now make and release their music, including many who eschew traditional record labels altogether in an effort to retain full creative control and ensure direct access to their fans.

What hasn't changed, however, is the immense pool of talent to be found across Toronto's many and varied music scenes. Just when one might be forgiven for thinking that everything new had already been heard, along comes an essential talent such as Lido Pimienta, Jessie Reyez, Tika or IsKwé (who is interviewed in this edition) to upturn our preconceptions of what "essential" sounds like today.

As a centre for creative expression where music in all its forms has been a part of the lifeblood for almost a century, Hart House is delighted to contribute in any way it can to the ongoing conversation about the role of music in the city we call home. Those students who once again have made demo a reality deserve our praise and thanks for helping to expand that conversation in ways that are equitable, inclusive and engaging.

zoe dille, staff advisor

If you are reading this issue of *demo* then it's already 2018! Happy New Year to all our readers and contributors. Here we are a decade later and demo is still going strong, still engaging students and still making connections to the campus and broader community in interesting and innovative ways all the while demonstrating the myriad of ways that music continues to be our most common language and the soundtrack to our lived experience. And so, it is fitting that the common denominator of this issue of demo is about the democratization of music because not so long ago and much to the chagrin of record labels everywhere, consumer practices in accessing, purchasing, and consuming music were on the brink of changing forever when websites like Napster came along. The ensuing discussions, court cases and general "sky is falling' mentality that followed paved the way for musicians to make and control their music in ways never thought of before. Further, this new found freedom allowed the general public to hear and support musicians who they would otherwise not have known about. A beautiful musical universe suddenly opened up even wider.

In some ways you can align this shift with Hart House as well, in the lead up to the House's 100th anniversary in 2019, it too has turned a corner for the better on what were then common practices such as prohibiting women from the house. When you look around Hart House today and see the cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity of people who use the house, participate in our programs or who have simply found a 'home' here, it's hard to imagine Hart House ever being any other way. The move towards a more inclusive environment has been an ongoing one, as we continue to aim for a space that is welcoming to all students with particular attention paid to providing relevant entry points of engagement for racialized and Indigenous students. Hart House has also branched out to the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses, embedding Hart House program staff on a part-time basis in order to try and better support student programming tri-campus wide. With stronger tri-campus and community partnerships and programming, we have been able to provide diverse activations that have included such things as Indigenous Education Week, Global Commons, and the Annual Hancock Lecture centring on Anti Black Racism among other exciting initiatives.

Democracy is about social justice, whether it is situated in the arena of music or on a global stage, and Hart House welcomes and provides rich opportunities for students to engage in dialogue, practices and leadership opportunities that support and enhance social justice as a way of life.

Perhaps not by accident, I am writing about social justice on the eve of Martin Luther King Jr Day in the United States, I will end with Dr. King's insightful words that live on forever: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

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masthead

harry myles

co-editor in chief

I first discovered *demo* one ridiculously hot, sweaty day three years ago. It was the frosh week Clubs Fair and like usual, it took place on the hottest day of the summer. Seeing the *demo* table, I was shocked to find such a hip magazine at UofT (a place often viewed as a collection of academics that never leave the library). That was in 2015 and now it's 2018 and I've gone from an occasional contributor to the co-editor-in-chief, something I could never have expected. *Demo* is not just a publication or a website. It's a community. It's a place on campus that features some of the most creative and interesting individuals you'll ever meet and a welcome reprieve from the stress of papers and projects. Writing for *demo* gave me a chance to explore a realm outside of academia and pursue the world of music journalism. To say I've grown as a writer and editor for *demo* is an understatement and I think that goes for just about everyone that's ever contributed to UofT's greatest hidden secret.

With this issue, the writers have once again delved into the complexities of the Toronto scene and revealed its diverse and exceptional stories. They have done a phenomenal job and I couldn't be prouder of what we've accomplished. Thank you to everyone involved and our countless other contributors that make *demo* possible. Every year, our writers, designers, illustrators, photographers, and editors outdo themselves and 2018 is no different. Enjoy!

dora boras

co-editor in chief

Thinking back to my very first *demo* meeting, in my first month of university, I feel ancient and introspective. About 40 students had gathered into a room at the Hart House, going around introducing ourselves by name and favourite band. "My name is Dora," I said, "and I love Fugazi." I can never tell if I should cringe at the memory of aligning myself with such an introduction, or if this declaration was really just a window into who I really was (and still am). Four years have passed since that fateful afternoon, and it has been such a pleasure to watch *demo* change and grow throughout the years, and to be part of its development. I'd like to think of *demo*, with its bold and subversive tone, as a bit of a rebel amongst the other publications on campus. *demo* is, and always will be, committed to making space for a multiplicity of stories and perspectives, and unapologetically so. In our already-dystopian future, I feel so lucky to have been able to be a part of a student publication that never cares to try to look cool –but just is. *demo* has become the site of growth and experimentation for so many writers. With a misty eye, my hope is that *demo* will continue to connect with and inspire young writers and artists to cultivate their skills and watch their ideas flourish. I'd like to say thank you to our readers, contributors, and everyone involved with this year's issue, and thank you, demo, for being such an important part of my university experience.

letters

anna trikas
online editor

During Frosh week of my first year at UofT, I spotted the *demo* table at clubs fair. I immediately signed myself up, but didn't really contribute much until friends encouraged me to the following year. Since then, I have had the chance to be both a writer, as well as an editor for the publication. Something I really appreciate about being a part of *demo* is that it has given me a chance to be involved with the editing, writing, and publishing processes directly, opportunities that I wouldn't have gotten in a classroom setting.

I have been part of other UofT clubs, but unique to *demo* is its enthusiastic and committed community of writers. Whether from first years new to UofT, or fourth year students who have been involved with *demo* since their start, consistently throughout the year I have been submitted insightful and thought provoking pieces. I have thoroughly enjoyed editing all of your work, as well as meeting all of you. Your devotion to *demo* does not go unnoticed, and we appreciate it immensely.

Thank you to everyone who has worked with and contributed to *demo* this year, as well as to everyone on the masthead. It's been a pleasure working with all of you!

yasmine elsanyoura
design editor

Demo has been a constant in my life for the last 4 years and each year has taught me something new. Like many of the editors, my *demo* journey began at an orientation week Clubs Fair and three very friendly faces. One of them would go on to trust me with being design editor for *demo* in my third year, and that moment is still with me today. When someone believes in you the way the people of *demo* believed in me and continue to believe in the members of our little community, your perspective shifts a little. You become more confident in your abilities, you advance your skills in ways you couldn't have imagined, and you learn to believe in yourself with the same ferocity your *demo* family does.

I returned as design editor for this year's issue, and I could not be happier of what our incredible design team has accomplished. I want to thank all of the designers who put their time and effort and nights into making this issue what it is. Our design team is outstanding this year and full of so much talent that it makes my heart flutter a little bit. As for our readers, thank you for picking this up, and thank you for your support. I hope you enjoy issue xiv.

Michael Bethlehem
"Fight Dirty" and "Off the Books" by Guignol and Mischief Brew

Bruce
Charlie Puth and Shawn Mendes

Danlin Zeng
BTS (Bangtan Boys)

Anja Feyzioglu
"Three Thirty" by Reaper

by
Catherine Kawpeng

photos by
Noor Hasan

Senthu Yogeswaran
"Soldier" by Fleurie

Allie Kuo
"One More Night" by Maroon 5

Nadia Abdel Halim
"Man's Not Hot" by Big Shaq

Ahmad Shah
"The Violence" by Rise Against

WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

HART HOUSE MUSIC NOTING THE LANDSCAPE

A celebration of Hart House's 100 years of musical glory

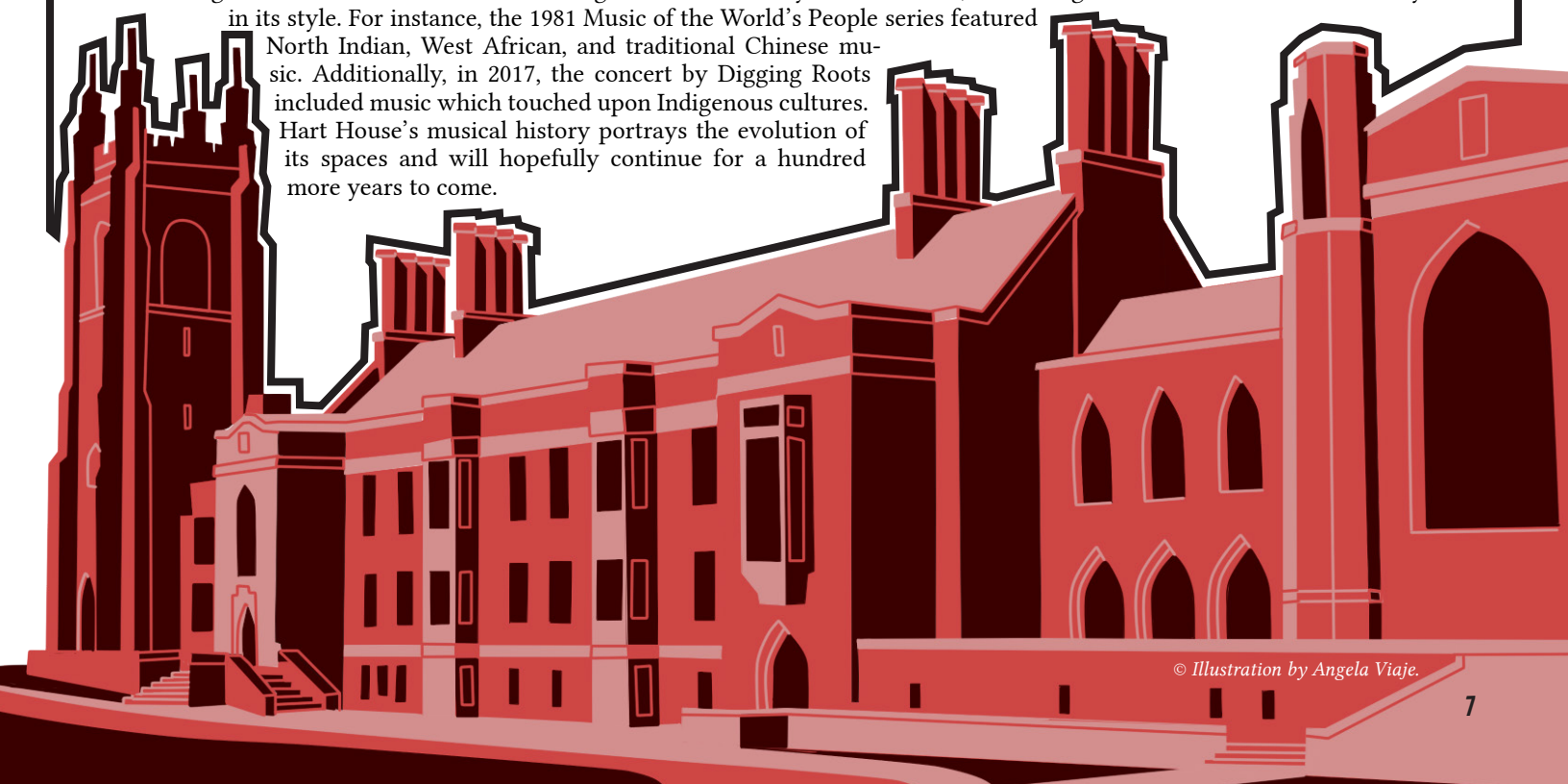
By Vivian Li

In anticipation for Hart House's 100th anniversary, *Demo* has decided to chronicle the House's musical past. In 1999, Jim Bartley, Brian Pronger, and Rupert Schieder discussed the history of Hart House music in "Music: No Ragtime in the House" for the institution's 80th anniversary chronicle entitled *A Strange Elation: Hart House, the First Eighty Years*. Hart House's opening decade of music was vivacious and gained momentum as time passed. The first musical performance took place in 1919, as the pipe band of the 49th Highlanders entertained guests at a formal dinner in the Great Hall. In the same year, the Music Club was established. Other milestones were soon reached, including the first Sunday Concert, hosted by Warden J. Burgon Bickersteth on November 12, 1922 and the 1924 premier performance of the Hart House String Quartet, founded by Alice and Vincent Massey.

As the music tapped down the stairs and scaled up the House, more instruments were purchased to meet the growing concert demand. In 1935, Hart House bought a collection of violas which were made between 1680 and 1761. They were used in a performance in 1970 by the Hart House Consort and remained one of the House's many treasures. The original Steinway grand piano was purchased in 1919, the second in 1949, and the official Hart House Grand— a 1935 New York Steinway— was acquired in 1984.

Hart House's musical initiatives continued to change in style and shape. Some ensembles took the international stage, with the Hart House Orchestra (inaugurated in 1954) representing Canada at the Brussels World's Fair in 1958. Others were keen to extend the resources available to students at the Hart House Record Room (initiated in 1948), expanding the repertoire to include records of jazz and folk music. In 1957, the Jazz Sub-Committee was formed; the style later established its influence at the House with Oscar Peterson's 1961 performance in the Great Hall and the 1977 week-long jazz festival.

Although Hart House's musical mission originated from mostly classical roots, it has long since introduced more diversity in its style. For instance, the 1981 Music of the World's People series featured North Indian, West African, and traditional Chinese music. Additionally, in 2017, the concert by Digging Roots included music which touched upon Indigenous cultures. Hart House's musical history portrays the evolution of its spaces and will hopefully continue for a hundred more years to come.



© Illustration by Angela Viaje.

An interview with

MOCKY

by Isaac Fox

© Photo by Dalton Blanco. Further edits by Jordan McIntyre.

"The people who are the most successful in the long-term are the ones who naturally experiment with different styles."

You might not know multi-instrumentalist, producer and songwriter Mocky by name, but chances are you've heard at least one of his songs. Born Dominic Salole, Mocky first emerged in the early-2000's Berlin electronic scene. Since then, he has produced for an array of artists most notably Feist and Kelala. Furthermore, as a solo artist, he's released five solo albums since 2002 as well as his ongoing *Moxtape* mixtape series. Mocky is also an alumnus of the University of Toronto, which he attended between 1994 and 1998 as a member of the Jazz Studies program, specializing in acoustic bass. Demo sat down with Mocky this year to discuss how his time at university helped mould his artistry, his advice for current students in the Faculty of Music, and the essentials needed for a DIY studio space.

How did your time at UofT contribute to your development as a musician?

I think for me, it was really important to be a part of a musical community during those foundational years, and I found that at U of T. The music program reinforced a lot of my theoretical knowledge, and on top of that, I did a ton of learning outside of school. University gives you the perfect time to explore outside of your comfort zone and the material that you cover in class; when I was here, I was playing jazz, but then producing hip-hop on the side or doing jam sessions wherever I could. As soon as I got out of class, it was onto something new and that made me really comfortable adapting to any creative space. So I'd say that if you've got one foot in school, and one foot in the real world as a musician, then you're off to a great start, no matter what you're doing.

Do you think there's a certain mentality that's necessary for longevity in the music industry?

Definitely. The thing that's hardest to wrap your head around is that there's never any finish line, there's never an arrival point, you're never really reaching every single one of your goals or knowing all there is to be known. It's art, so once you've made one piece or learnt one technique, you still have to keep moving.

One mindset that I think a lot of recording artists fall into is the "sticking-with-what-works" mentality; they'll make one great album and then try to duplicate it the next time around, or they'll use the same instruments and recording techniques on every project. But the people who are the most successful in the long-term are the ones who naturally experiment with different styles from project to project, constantly reinventing themselves and not being afraid to try new things. It's easy to develop a personal formula, but it's really not the way to go. You have to constantly learn, evolve, and try to push your own boundaries, and I think that drive and curiosity has to be maintained if you're going to make music your life.

As a producer, what would you recommend as some gear essentials for bedroom musicians?

First of all: Pro Tools. I grew up in the four-track era, so for me, it's really natural to just play something down and then edit it. I use Pro Tools for that through an Apollo rig when I'm composing by myself. Any DAW you're comfortable with is good though.

And as far as physical gear, I've become less of a gear guy in the last five years, so my advice for DIY musicians is different now than it would have been before, at times when I was making a lot of beats. Lately, I've really gone into a more mental place, where the actual gear doesn't matter, so long as it's the right idea and it's spontaneous. You could go into a professional studio, spend thirty grand and ultimately come up with nothing, or you could record an inspired voice memo in your bedroom, and that piece of sound becomes the most powerful tool in your arsenal. So I would say that it never hurts to have a decent mic, and some audio treatment for your bedroom studio, but you really don't need to focus on having the most expensive equipment. It's that human energy that you put into your recordings that matters most. Just play, record, listen, and keep going.

Mocky's latest release *How to Hit What and How Hard (The Moxtape Vol. IV)* is out now via his Bandcamp, with full stems available for free on his website that are "a producer's toolbox, ready to be sampled."

Edited and condensed for publication.

© Photo by Mary Rozzi.

MUSIC ON SCREEN

HOW SOUNDTRACKS MAKE OR BREAK A FILM

ALISHA FARROW

© Illustration by Iris Deng

Have you ever been watching a film or TV show and suddenly become hyper-aware of the 'background' music? Noticing the music in a film can be an appreciative nod towards a good choice but more times than not it's a recognition that the music is completely off-putting. That's not to say that a movie can't be good with a mediocre soundtrack, but if the music and the shot don't vibe it can make the entire thing feel like a cheap joke. The music has to match the mood, timing, and overall flow of the scene, can't take away from the dialogue, and should transition smoothly in and out of the video – basically, the audio should harmonize with the image rather than act as a distraction.

Music that doesn't fit the mood of the movie often confuses the viewers because audio is used to create a certain atmosphere and helps suck people into the emotions being shown on screen. The best example of a movie with a terrible soundtrack, cited by both *IMDb* and *Taste of Cinema* (and reinforced by a general consensus on *Reddit*) as having the worst film score, is Richard Donner's *Ladyhawke*. The movie is a fantasy film set in medieval Europe and the 80s synth that plays throughout the movie feels a little bit out of place. *Ladyhawke* by itself isn't that bad but the music is jarring enough to make the entire film seem almost like it was made as a joke. The poor choice in background music ruins the atmosphere of the film and consistently draws the viewer out of the story and back into the modern day, making the movie fairly difficult to sit through.

In an effort to find a better movie than *Ladyhawke*, this year I decided to try something new and went to the Toronto International Film Festival for the first time. I saw Clio Barnard's *Dark River*, a drama about a woman named Alice who returns home after the death of her father and has to make tough decisions about the future of her childhood home. The film focuses heavily on Alice's intrusive memories and consistently uses the same light yet emotional music throughout the transitions between past and present. This allows viewers to create an association between the music and the main character's memories so that by the end of the movie it becomes no longer necessary to show elaborate flashbacks – the music itself immediately informs you of what Alice is experiencing.

By using the background music consistently, it becomes integrally linked to the experience of that action or theme. This is a technique used in many TV shows as well, wherein the music becomes linked to the show through its consistent use in each episode – think about the music that plays after the commercial break in your favourite show; the same music is used in each episode to bring you immediately back into the setting of the show after the break. This music, much like the theme song of the show, becomes ingrained in us so that if we hear it on its own we are involuntarily reminded of that particular show.

Conversely, the absence of music is also used strategically in cinema. Silence almost always creates tension, especially in dramas and horror films. Think about watching a horror movie: there is often a scene where, right before something bad happens or there's a jump scare, there is a brief, tension-inducing moment of complete silence. Perhaps the only sound is the character breathing, maybe not even that. The juxtaposition between the loud sounds that often accompany scary scenes in movies and the calm immediately before makes the scene more shocking. Similarly, dramas use this technique between silence and periods of high emotion to make the viewers even more emotional. The absence of music intensifies the emotions that are evoked by the sounds that occur just before or after. Another genre that occasionally uses silence is action: if it's used before or after a major climatic or action scene, it can create an almost shocking sense of calmness. Consequently, the least abrasive music technique – silence – can become the most intense and emotional of all.

Professor Benjamin Wright from UofT's Cinema Studies department says that film scores function as a layer: "The use of song can add another dimension of meaning to a film's story, as in *The Graduate* which features the sorrowful songs of Simon and Garfunkel." In this way, the background music is contributing to the emotional setting of the film, informing viewers of how they should be feeling during a specific scene, even if that scene doesn't explicitly show the emotion in the imagery. In addition, Wright states that, "Music can also work counterintuitively by working against the visual action, as in Lars Von Trier's *Antichrist* when a beautiful classical piece is juxtaposed with the death of a child on screen." The music, in this case, adds that extra layer of emotion by covering a disturbing shot with elegant music, making the entire scene feel more graceful than it should and adding an understated, almost thoughtful, sadness to the clip. If the music in that scene had been more gloomy, the overall emotion of the moment would have also been sadder, but that extra elegance would have been lost. The soundtrack of a movie therefore has a certain level of control over the emotions of the viewer that other film technicalities, like lighting and camera work, contribute to but cannot control as thoroughly.

> "MUSIC IS USED TO INSPIRE – HOPE, FEAR, EVEN EMPATHY."

Music is used to inspire – hope, fear, even empathy. Film and TV shows utilize sound as a way to create an emotional atmosphere and foster continuity. The darkest dramas are filled with emotional instrumental pieces and horror films rely on the juxtaposition of intense background music and tense periods of silence. To be effective, it's important that the mood of the music matches what's happening on screen. Where a book would fill in the unsaid with the thoughts and reasonings of a character, a film utilizes music to add an explanatory take on the characters' emotional states. Music is, in this respect, like an unspoken conversation between the viewers and the characters on screen.

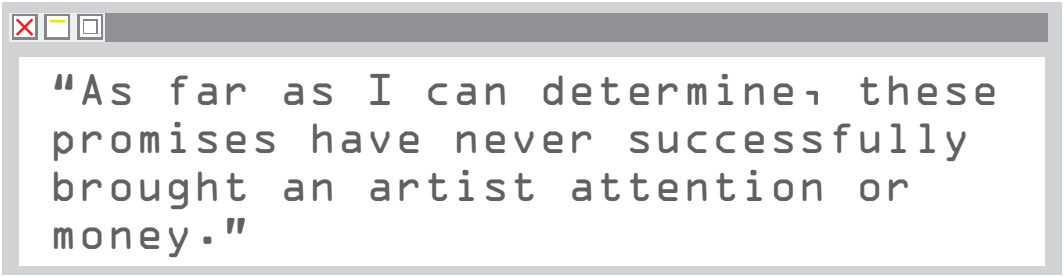
TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

SCAMMING INDIE ARTISTS

exploring the scams in the music industry targeting small-scale musicians

daniel lewycky

Last week my Gmail account officially ran out of space. The reason? The majority of the 15 gigabytes of storage Google provides was filled with spam that had escaped the Gmail filter. Why me? I'm an independent musician playing in the local experimental blues band Dorval. When I compare my life before and after the band, it's fairly apparent that indie musicians face a disproportionate amount of attempted fraud, much of which is conducted over the same channels as day-to-day band business. These are not the kind of scams you might expect from the music industry. I don't plan to provide you with an exposé on second-hand ticket sales people (I refuse to use the word "scalpers"), Taylor Swift's confusing new sales model, or disproportionate "house cuts" from cover charges. Those possibly dishonest practices are part and parcel of the music industry, the results of working in a financially uncertain, creative field. No, these scams are a product of the internet and uniquely heinous for their marks.

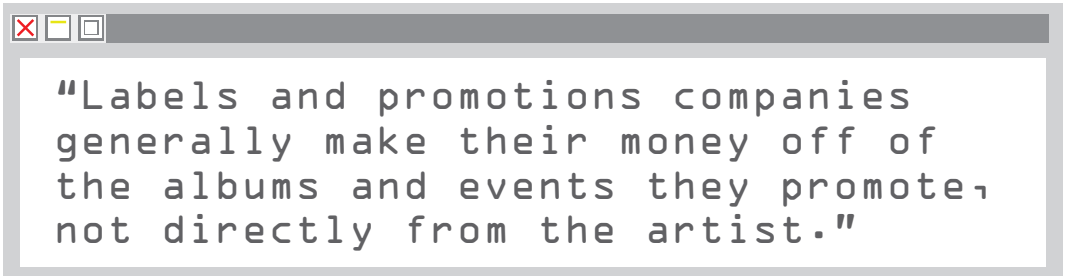


The emails come in like clockwork. Take this message: "Good day Daniel Lewycky, I discovered some of your music online," said a group called Skunk Radio Live, "we are looking for new music for our radio network, music licensing catalogue and artist promotion roster, and I'd like to invite you to audition." When you follow the paths these emails propose, somewhere down the line you almost inevitably get asked for a form of payment, either PayPal, Bitcoin, e-transfer, or credit card information, in return for services rendered. Those alleged services can range from "web magazine" promotion to radio play to showing high ranking industry executives your demo. Like most scams, they're fascinating to pick apart. Much can be gained by examining why they choose their marks and how the scammers plan to benefit from their exploitation.

These grifts are universally designed to separate artists from their money. That is accomplished by several methods, most immediately using the financial transfer strategy outlined above. Often, payments will take the form of a recurring subscription, in a model seeming to emulate legitimate businesses in the industry like Sonicbids and ReverbNation. To the uninitiated, those are sites which host your music, connect you with music promoters looking for artists, and provide you with a framework for your Electronic Press Kit in exchange for a monthly charge. Nicholas Schneider of The Bay Bridged refers to these sites as "vampiric," not really providing much for the cost, but they are contrastingly legitimate insofar as they actually provide a service.

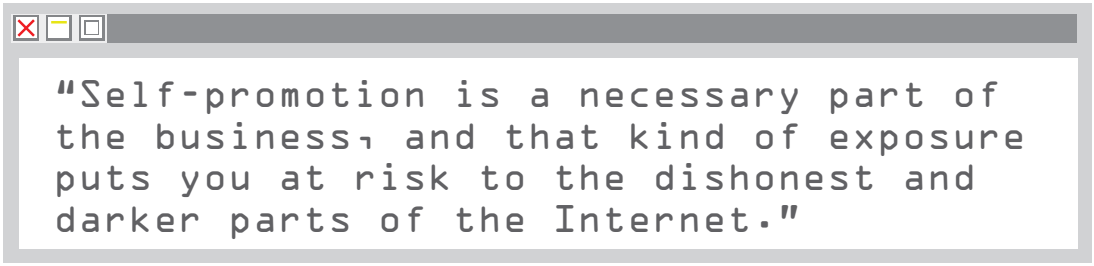
Despite the internet's high concentration of devil's

advocates, I have been unable to find an article, blog post, or Reddit comment defending the legitimacy of the email-scam practice. As far as I can determine, these promises have never successfully brought an artist attention or money. As per Dan Reifsnyder of Sonicbids, "Publishers, agents, managers, labels, etc. all make money on the back end by taking a percentage of the profits. Nobody asks you to front money." Legitimate companies don't request money for their services; labels and promotions companies generally make their money off of the albums and events they promote, not directly from the artist.


"Labels and promotions companies generally make their money off of the albums and events they promote, not directly from the artist."

To understand how these scams are viable enough to exist, look to their marks. First and foremost, musicians at every level of the industry are inherently more susceptible to fraudsters by fashioning themselves as public figures. Self-promotion is a necessary part of the business and that kind of exposure puts you at risk to the dishonest and darker parts of the internet. Pictures, contact info, even personal information in songs can contribute to profiles used by scammers.

Much of the low range music industry's support network is DIY: venues set up in lofts, small-scale promoters, self-employed social media agents. Small-scale operations and scammers tend to have similar eccentricities and sparse design styles. *Cashbox Magazine* was one of the leading industry trade magazines in Nashville from the 1940s to the 1990s, helping Johnny Cash, the Allman Brothers, and others rise through the ranks of the local scene. In contrast, the online *Cashbox Magazine* is a relatively small-scale promotions company started in 2006. Cashbox requests $1,600 through Facebook messages in return for "real fm [*sic*] radio release to over 15,000 fm [*sic*] stations." This is not to imply that *Cashbox Magazine* is a scam. Rather, *Cashbox* has the hallmarks of a small-scale operation with a far reach (thanks to the internet), whose communication, site design, and strategies mirror many of the red flags common to fraud, making it difficult to distinguish between them and a scam to an outside observer. I communicated with Cashbox for a brief time over Facebook, researched them online, and ultimately chose not to solicit their services after their responses didn't address my concerns.


"Self-promotion is a necessary part of the business, and that kind of exposure puts you at risk to the dishonest and darker parts of the Internet."

Musicians are taught to take every opportunity that crosses their path. On the one hand, issues with reliability force musicians to view opportunities with some degree of skepticism. On the other, real opportunities are scarce enough to come by and the financial risks are so perilous that everything demands consideration. Moreover, this is to say nothing of the emotional corrosion that can be caused by the slow speed of success (if any is to be found) for individuals in the independent music scene. Financial and social barriers to entry can eat away at the plans of the most responsible and careful artists. This makes them desperate enough to explore situations that seem too good to be true.

Unfortunately, there are no surefire solutions for targets of fraud. Scams evolve like any other criminal enterprise: at the same rate or faster than efforts to combat them. However ineffective, there are things each independent artist can do to sift through business proposals. Strategies include being careful without being combative about offers, requesting as much detail as possible, taking meetings over the phone or in person, researching email addresses, phone numbers, and radio station callsigns, fact-checking every detail you're given, and following up on those which don't check out. For more information you can also check out James Moore's advice featured on his PR company's website, Independent Music Promotions.

The most important step is education and advocacy. Posting on Facebook groups or message boards to alert as many people as you can about scams, telling a New York radio station that their call-sign is being used to back up fraud, or even writing an article in *Demo* to provide a reliable source of information are all methods to combat these scams and provide advice for any artist that may think that an offer really is too good to be true.

THE GOOD THE RAD & THE UGLY

OF TORONTO'S LIVE MUSIC SCENE

an inside look into toronto's live music culture

felipe vellejo

The beauty about living in a big city is that there is no shortage of opportunities to see some good live music. There is a place for every taste and genre in the city:365 days a year. There are dozens of venues that are catching the eye of bigger and bigger artists, which in turn is bringing more prestige to the city's claim a music city. Even for those who enjoy the smaller, quainter types of live music, T.O. has several venues that you may have never heard or seen, but you'll want to get quickly acquainted with these imaginative performance spaces. However, every rose has its thorns. With increasing commercial popularity, and the growing financial stress of Toronto, not all of these incredible and important venues survive the harsh economic climate. And so, whether you are a newbie, a casual listener or even a die-hard fanatic of the scene, here's some of the things you need to know about the Toronto live music scene.

The Good

The best thing about Toronto live music is that it is constant and growing. The City of Toronto itself has stated, "The live music sector generates an estimated $455 million in revenues and contributes $252 million to the Canadian economy" of which "Ontario's live music sector generates 80 per cent of total national revenues, up from 65 per cent in 2005." City of Toronto has also stated that "the Canadian live music market has grown at an annual average rate of 6.4 per cent since 2010", meaning that Toronto, as well as the other Canadian cities, have been becoming increasingly more enveloped in their respective live music culture.

A report by Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN) releasing data on the top 10 music growth cities in Canada has released that a neighborhood in Toronto, Little Portugal/Trinity-Bellwoods, "has been ranked as the number one location in Canada for the growth in the number of musicians, songwriters, and other people involved in creating music". Not only do we claim top spot, we also have 3 in the top 5 on the list (the others being Christie and Exhibition/Brockton/Parkdale Village) cementing our place as the frontrunners of Canadian live music.

We can see this by looking at the big names that have been rolling into Toronto in the past year or so. They've broken the trend of only filling the ACC and Rogers, and have expanded to other venues; Ringo Starr at Massey Hall, Chance the Rapper at RBC (then TD) Echo Beach, Twenty One Pilots at Budweiser Stage. Even The Phoenix and Danforth are getting their fair share of big name artists like Logic, Portugal the Man and Milky Chance. Toronto has not only grown into a music city, but into a music hub for all the biggest and brightest artists in the world, and we are lucky enough to enjoy it.

The Rad

Now, the reason for the word play is not to try to be clever (not entirely anyways) but rather because there are a bunch of different, "rad" places in Toronto that are not very well known or quite underrated. These places are bound to be a blast for even the most casual of music goers.

If you're near UTSG campus, you are a short walk away from Kensington Market, where one of the coolest venues lives; Supermarket. It's a restaurant bar filled with a diverse set of live shows, ranging from indie bands, slam poetry, live DJs and even book launches! But if you're looking for more of a rock feel, Smiling Buddha can be your haven. It may look like a typical College St. dive bar, but

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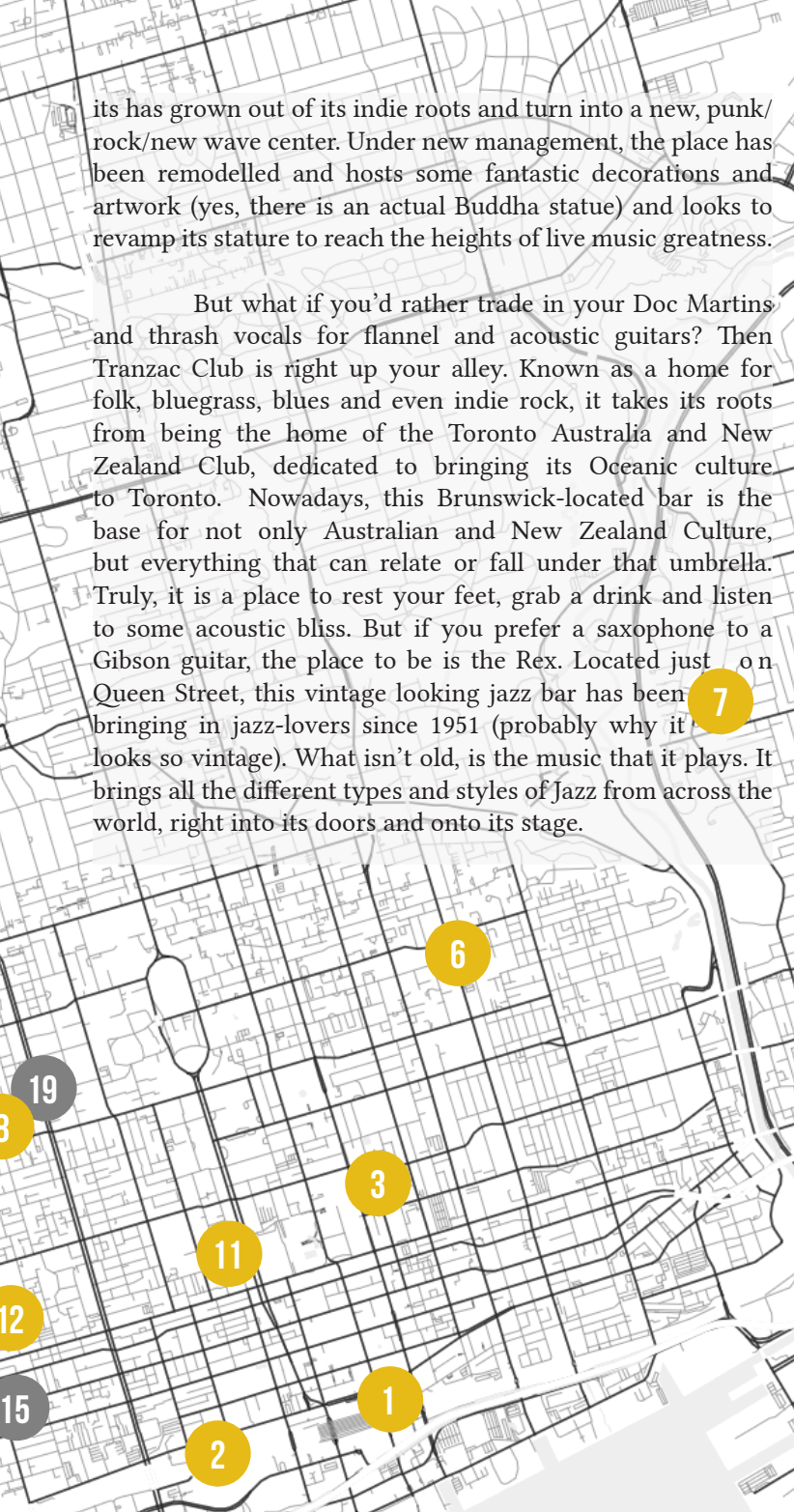
its has grown out of its indie roots and turn into a new, punk/rock/new wave center. Under new management, the place has been remodelled and hosts some fantastic decorations and artwork (yes, there is an actual Buddha statue) and looks to revamp its stature to reach the heights of live music greatness.

But what if you'd rather trade in your Doc Martins and thrash vocals for flannel and acoustic guitars? Then Tranzac Club is right up your alley. Known as a home for folk, bluegrass, blues and even indie rock, it takes its roots from being the home of the Toronto Australia and New Zealand Club, dedicated to bringing its Oceanic culture to Toronto. Nowadays, this Brunswick-located bar is the base for not only Australian and New Zealand Culture, but everything that can relate or fall under that umbrella. Truly, it is a place to rest your feet, grab a drink and listen to some acoustic bliss. But if you prefer a saxophone to a Gibson guitar, the place to be is the Rex. Located just on Queen Street, this vintage looking jazz bar has been bringing in jazz-lovers since 1951 (probably why it looks so vintage). What isn't old, is the music that it plays. It brings all the different types and styles of Jazz from across the world, right into its doors and onto its stage.



But if you're looking for prestige amongst the ranks, a place that has seen the likes of U2, Metallica, Guns and Roses, Foo Fighters, amongst others, then your palace is Bovine Sex Club. The name may seem erratic, but it fits the the atmosphere; an entrance completely covered in old bikes and bike parts, the inside filled with garage sale items dangling from ceiling, and the walls filled with beautiful and quizzical art pieces. This place hosts itself anything from rock, to punk, to metal and back. Even fit with a tiki rooftop bar, this venue of dreams can be both a mosh-pit fantasy or a cool summer day's daydream. As you can see there is no shortage of places that you may call home, each with its own unique touch, but all working under the same goal of good, live music.

The Ugly

But unfortunately, as I said before, that what glitters is not always gold, and for some venues in Toronto, its more like coal. As the major venues like Budweiser, Rebel and Massey continue to grow and thrive, the smaller, less popular venues get let in the dust and eventually perish. This year alone, seven of some of the most favored and historical venues have been put to the axe; Hugh's Room, Soybomb, Hoxton, Central, Holy Oak, Harlem, and finally the Silver Dollar. Not only have these fantastic places been home to many admired and successful artists, but they have been known as safe spaces for many.

Soybomb was a DIY space (a place that breaks out of the restaurant/bar style, and into a platform for free expression and talent) where many acts could break-free of the status quo of live music and play in the way they desired. Holy Oak was a queer-friendly space that encouraged creativity and individuality, that became a site of acceptance, inclusivity and good music. Now that these fantastic venues have closed, we're left wondering, why?

The truth is, because Toronto is expanding so greatly, real estate costs are skyrocketing and smaller, independently-owned venues can't keep up. Condo expansion is eating up the venues that we all enjoy and love, and until somebody from City Hall or Toronto Music Advisory Council (TMAC) make significant changes, this trend may still not end. Our only hope is that City Hall puts their money where the mouth is in terms of their promises to stop the "crisis" that is forming, and dream to see some of those brilliant venues get revamped and back to their deserving place in the Toronto live music scene.

But for every darkness, there is light. . .

Do not let Toronto's troubles mask the fantastic and enjoyable properties it has in the live music scene. We still live in the hub of Canadian music, and we can still see numerous amounts of local and international talent across the various and diverse venues in the city. The only thing that's stopping you from delving yourself into this fabulous world of live music is you (and maybe your wallet). Question is: Can you get jiggy with it?

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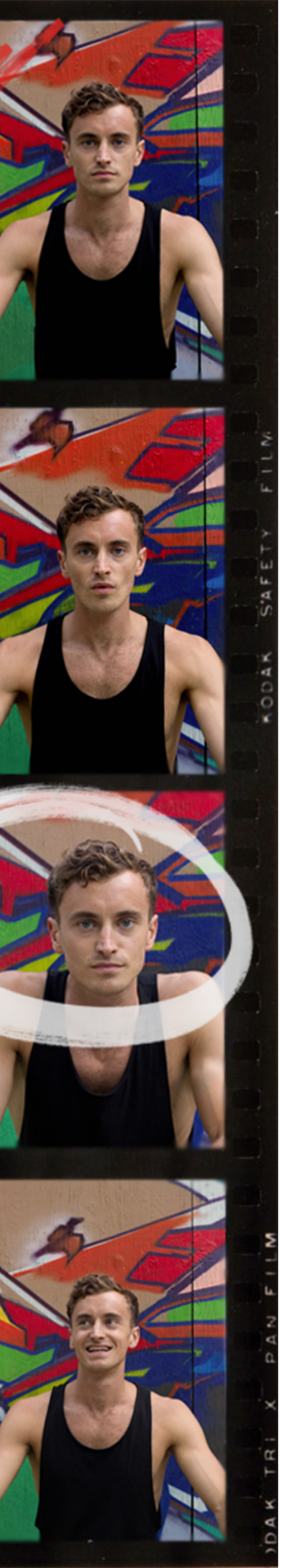

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interview by dora boras

photography by andrea maçanovic

at the roots of weaves

an interview with the polaris music prize nominees

This past September, *Demo* had the chance to sit down with Canadian indie rockers Weaves in Toronto's Kensington Market to talk about their new album, the Polaris prize, and performing with Tanya Tagaq, and how to pick the best watermelon at the supermarket over empanadas as the sun set over Augusta Avenue.

Growing up, the members of Toronto indie rock ensemble *Weaves* came from different musical upbringings. "I was really into INXS, INXS kick was a big deal for me when I was a kid," guitarist Morgan Waters tells me, sitting across from me at Jumbo Empanada in Kensington Market. Their drummer, percussionist Spencer Cole talks about his early exposure to jazz. "I listened to what a lot of my father played, which was like Chick Corea, and usually like jazz fusion. And also this one John Coltrane record, it was the weirdest record – it was like improv, spontaneously composed on a record and that freaked me out, I had no idea what was going on." Bassist Zach Bines chimes in, adding, "I was in love with Alanis Morissette when I was a kid, Weird Al Yankovic, yup. Tragically Hip, first favourite band. I found out a very good friend of mine, who I'm still friends with, played guitar and I thought that was the coolest thing in the world." Jasmyn recalls the first instance that inspired her to get into playing music. "I saw a friend's older brother do a cover night, and he was playing just like, Neil Young, and we weren't of age but we were allowed to go, and for some reason it clicked in my mind that you could make music. I could play guitar, he's doing it. And soon after, my parents bought me an acoustic guitar." She later recounted her first concert, seeing Gwen Stefani doing push-ups on stage during No Doubt's *Tragic Kingdom* tour. "When you see that, you're like, yeah, I gotta be a singer," she says.

The band's name went through different iterations before finally settling on *Weaves*. "I like hair bands, and it's kind of like the weaving of music and genres, but it's hair," Jasmyn says, "I like hair, I had a band once called "Rat Tail" so I thought it'd be funny to keep the hair thing going. Morgan, for a while, didn't wanna do it." Jasmyn, unimpressed with Morgan's empanada eating abilities, turns to him and says, "this is a weird way of eating." Morgan, defensive, retorts: "I'm trying to get my salsa!"

When we met in September, their latest album, *Wide Open,* was a week away from release. The band shared their excitement to start performing the new songs, and receive feedback on their new album. "I'm excited for people to hear it and tell me what they think," Morgan starts. "It'll be fun

to play the songs live, there's some fun ones. It'll be fun to mess with them live and figure out their new identity as a live banger." Jasmyn adds, "they will morph into new things. We're looking forward to it. Though we wrote it fast, we were in a good headspace to write it. It seems stronger than the last one."

A week earlier, on September 19th, the band released a video for the track, "Scream," with Canadian throat singer Tanya Tagaq. The band reflected on how their collaboration with the singer came to be: "We met her two years ago when we were travelling to Iceland," Jasmyn recounts. "And she's a very, like, intense person, so once you're in her circle, you're in it. We had demoed that song, and I just felt like it'd be really beautiful if she performed on it. So I sent her the demo, and she liked it right away, and it all happened really quick. We recorded it with the band the week she came in and did the whole thing in two takes, and it was a really amazing experience." Morgan recalled the recording process as natural, but intense. "From the outside it seems like it comes easily for her. She just came in and did two takes and was like "alright, see ya," and we were left shaking at how crazy it sounds. It was powerful." Zach continued, "Listening to her do that in the studio was amazing. Her voice going over the low end of the track – I couldn't hear my bass. It was insane. It was so crazy." "He was so jealous," Morgan laughs. "But even when we did the song at Polaris," Jasmyn adds, "during sound check, it was so crazy because even through our monitors, when we started getting into it I was like, "oh wait, I need this way down," because it takes over your body like, wow."

> ***"In the canon of Toronto's rich indie scene, Weaves continue to resonate"***

The band was nominated for the Polaris Music Prize in 2017 for their self-titled album, and had the opportunity to perform "Scream" with Tanya Tagaq, also a nominee, alongside Gord Downie's *The Secret Path* and Lido Pimienta's *La Papessa*. The performance was memorable for its intensity and dynamic energy. During the performance, Jasmyn and Tanya turned to each other, and sang the song while holding each other's arms, mirroring the format of Inuit throat singing, where it is customary for two women to perform in this way. "Yeah it was just spur of the moment," Jasmyn recalls, "as Morgan said, we're more into improvising and being in the moment. And when you're doing a song like that, there's like a kinship because we're both women, and being in the music industry, it's a lot of men all the time. It was a nice moment of calmness and connection."

"Scream" carries a personal significance for Jasmyn, the lyricist of the band. "Women have a particular experience that's different than men. I have a special connection to my great-grandmother, and I think about the way that she was. She was born in 1917, and her attitude was super progressive, and you don't even realize that when you're a kid. You see things on the news and it can shock you, and I don't want to go to a place and feel unsafe, so it's reactionary in that way," she recalls. "When Tanya came on, it took on this whole other life, and that's what's special about it, it's not just for one group of people."

With the release of their new album, the band also released two lipstick shades, named "Scream," a fiery coral, and "Lala," a vibrant blue. "I always loved lipstick and wearing makeup," Jasmyn explains. When asked why lipstick specifically, she says, "it shows a different way of being creative, and I feel like I haven't seen that before, where a band had a lipstick. You leave a concert and you buy a t-shirt and you identify with that shirt. You can pick up a lipstick – maybe you wear it to class, and you're like "yeah, I'm going to wear my "Scream" lipstick, gonna have some confidence today. I tried to choose colours that would work on different skin tones. Pinks are kind of hard, orange works on a variety of skin tones, and the blue really pops. Anybody can wear it whatever shade they are and that was important to me." The purpose behind the bold lipsticks was to inspire. Jasmyn says, "I've always been a driven person, and I stick to my guns and do what I want to do, and I think other people should do that and be positive. We should be allies, not just hate each other. I think that doing things like that, hopefully it gives other people drive – you don't have to be in music but in whatever you do – to go after your goals, and I think that's important that people lead by example and hopefully younger people don't feel confined to whatever position they're in."

Conclusively, there is no end goal for *Weaves* as a project. "There's never an ending, just to get better and make cool stuff," Morgan explains. "I want *Weaves the Musical*," Jasmyn adds. As plates were cleared and the air began to cool on the patio of Jumbo Empanadas, Spencer gave us some useful advice on fruit selection. He says, "You start with the ones at the top, let's say you have a big barrel at…No Frills or whatever. And you're knocking on all of them. And you want to pick the lowest pitch, but you wanna make sure that it still rings. Like if it sounds dead, it's not a good watermelon. The lowest possible pitch that still resonates. So if it just sounds like this, 'blugh,' it's no good. Low but full bodied." In the canon of Toronto's rich indie scene, Weaves continue to resonate, their music fresh and colourful, using personal experiences to diversify our understanding of often universal themes.

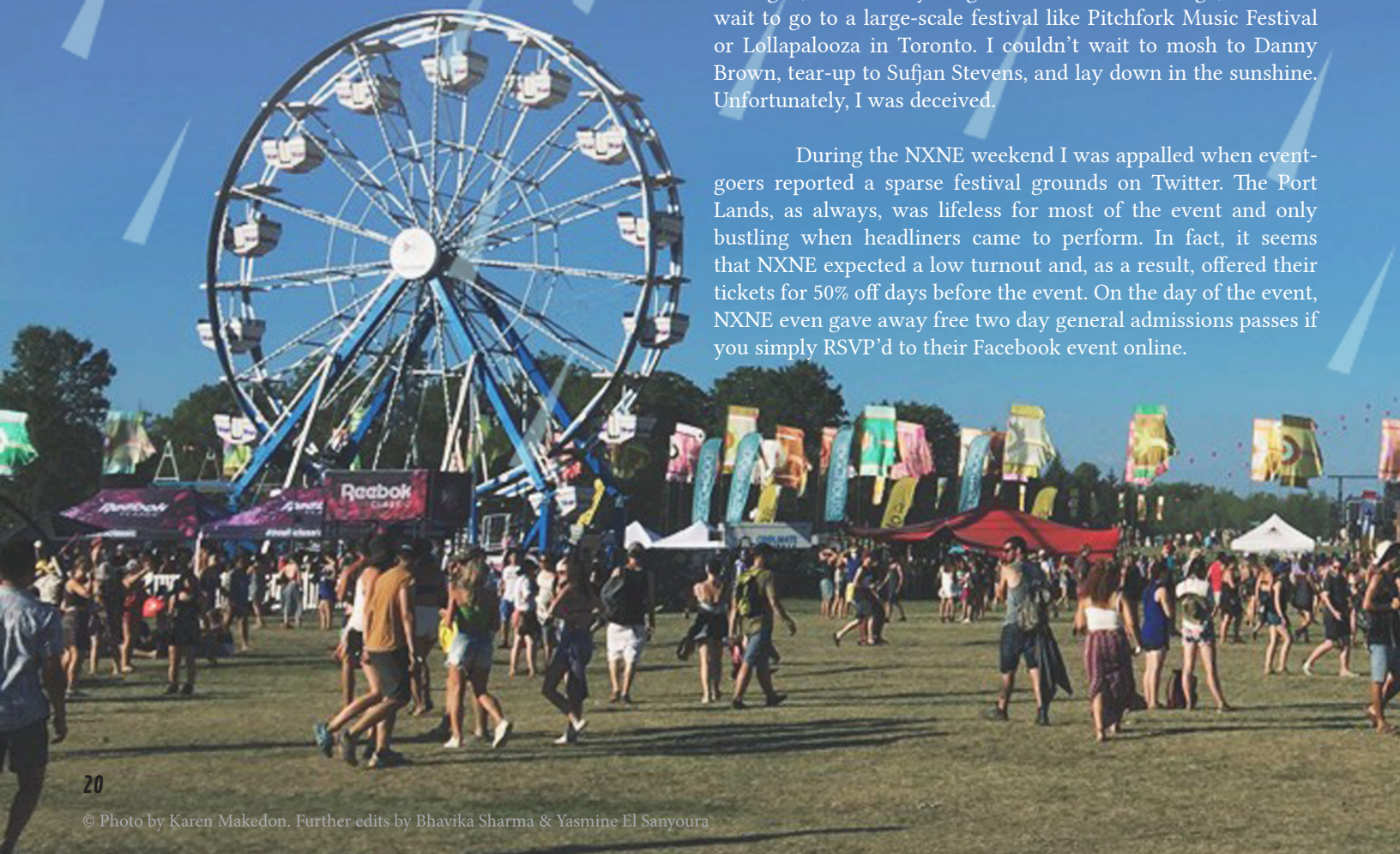
TORONTO DESERVES A BETTER MUSIC FESTIVAL SCENE.

Toronto's outdoor music festival scene is disappearing because of low attendance and lack of proper green space in the city's downtown core.

DAVEN BOPARAI

In the summer of 2017, I was a volunteer for North By Northeast, an annual music and arts festival in Toronto. I was strapped for cash and figured volunteering would be a fun and easy way to see a few artists for free. Growing up in Southwest Michigan, where everything revolved around Chicago, I couldn't wait to go to a large-scale festival like Pitchfork Music Festival or Lollapalooza in Toronto. I couldn't wait to mosh to Danny Brown, tear-up to Sufjan Stevens, and lay down in the sunshine. Unfortunately, I was deceived.

During the NXNE weekend I was appalled when event-goers reported a sparse festival grounds on Twitter. The Port Lands, as always, was lifeless for most of the event and only bustling when headliners came to perform. In fact, it seems that NXNE expected a low turnout and, as a result, offered their tickets for 50% off days before the event. On the day of the event, NXNE even gave away free two day general admissions passes if you simply RSVP'd to their Facebook event online.



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Toronto's relationship with outdoor music festivals is problematic. For starters, Toronto lacks a hallmark international music festival that many cities are known for. Chicago has Lollapalooza, Montreal has Osheaga, and New York has Governors Ball. One could even argue that Toronto lacks music festivals in general, and the festivals that Toronto does have are suffering. In the case with NXNE, music festivals in the city are finding it hard to generate buzz for their events, sustain growth and turn a profit. In fact, other festivals in Toronto are struggling to sustain attendance. Just last year Bestival, a UK festival import, announced they were pulling out of Toronto completely after two years. Outside of Toronto in Oro-Medonte, WayHome announced that it was taking a hiatus after rumors of a low turnout in their 2017 summer season. Low attendance goes beyond Toronto and Ontario. One of the most well-known music festivals in the United States, Bonnaroo, saw a 38% decrease in attendance in 2016 from 2015. Jonathan Wynn, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst noted in his Washington Post piece, *Are there too many music festivals?* that a possible explanation for poor attendance could be from a significant wave of commercialization of festivals and an oversaturation and uniformity of design. Oversaturation and uniformity could be a possible explanation of poor attendance at NXNE and Bestival, but another explanation could be a lackluster lineup. For the past few years, the Canadian dollar has been valued relatively low compared to its United States counterpart. This plays a huge role in securing lavish lineups for festivals.

Oversaturation, uniformity and a low dollar still doesn't explain why Toronto lacks a large scale international festival while Montreal does. What distinguishes Toronto from Montreal may be that Toronto is often considered to be a staple city in every band's tour. The argument can be made that the demand for festivals is lower in Toronto because Torontonians have the privilege to see individual bands when Montreal might not have that privilege for every new band. In addition, Montreal has over a decade of support for their large festivals. Osheaga has been growing for over ten decades and has earned a name for itself worldwide. Its reputation garners the international tourism necessary for a music festival to survive long term. Toronto festivals lack international reputation making growth of current festivals difficult.

Aside from issues regarding festival maintenance, another significant challenge for Toronto right now is lack of accessible, green space. The issue can be analyzed by looking to VELD, one of the largest music festivals in Toronto. It is currently held in Downsview Park with an attendance of around 80,000 over three days. VELD has successfully kept the large-scale festival scene alive in Toronto by showcasing the likes of Future, Major Lazer, and Migos all in a weekend. One argument against Downsview Park is that it's too far away from downtown Toronto - there's a reason why no other festival is held there. If you look at Montreal or Chicago, large scale festivals are either downtown or around it. Getting to Downsview Park, before the newly built Toronto–York Spadina Subway Extension, took around 40-50 minutes on a subway from Union Station, Toronto's central transportation hub. The whole trip takes around an hour, in contrast to Chicago where Millennium Park hosts Lollapalooza right in the city's downtown core. The distance of Downsview Park from downtown Toronto makes it inaccessible for a large-scale international festival like Lollapalooza or Osheaga to draw in international tourists that stay downtown.

However, Torontonians should still be optimistic. Toronto's lack of green space and problems with festival attendance have been recognized by city council including current Toronto mayor John Tory. Tory has consistently highlighted that Toronto lacks outdoor spaces for large-scale festivals and has gone on to create a music office in City Hall for music venues to cut through red tape faster. In addition to this, within the last year, plans for a Rail Deck Park in the heart of the city have emerged with Tory's full support. Along with the Rail Deck Park, the province announced plans to move forward with planning and designing for more green space on Toronto's Waterfront known as Celebration Common, a twenty acre flexible green space. Both of these new green spaces could serve as future locations for a large-scale music festival in Toronto. Whether John Tory can cultivate his vision for Toronto to become a music city is questionable. Although music festivals might be losing steam in recent years, there's potential for growth with a mayor that envisions Toronto with a large international music festival, more accessible green space, and a more vibrant music scene.

Even with festival woes, Toronto's music scene is still thriving and virtually every band that tours stops here. Green space and logistics are stopping Toronto from having an exciting outdoor music festival scene. Hopefully, with the right guidance from city council, we will experience a greater variety of festivals, including our own hallmark festival, in Toronto in the near future.

SUNDAY MORNING, *PRAISE IS FALLING*

an insiders' commentary on the unexplored world of your local church band // Rachel Evangeline Chiong

Would you wake up at 8 A.M. on a Sunday morning for a gig? For hundreds of people, the answer is a resounding "yes". While some nurse the alcoholic residue of a Smiling Buddha show that ended three hours after midnight, another kind of performance warms up in the corners of Toronto. In heritage buildings, community centres, living rooms, and rented movie theatres, people file in general admission style to attend a service and watch its regular opener: the worship team.

The worship team is both the same as any other band, yet wholly different. In preparation for this article, I interviewed four worship leaders (a.k.a. band leaders) across Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. This resulted in a piece that is part educational, part open-ended metaphor, and part love letter. So we'll start where I did, asking one question at a time.

What is the worship team? In essence, a worship team is a band that plays music every Sunday (or whatever day a church meets) in front of a congregation. Its roster includes both amateur and professional musicians who are members of the church. At first, these profiles are no different from the typical entourage you'd encounter in the music scene. You have the extracurricular whizkids like Shawn Li from the University of Toronto's Power to Change club, who played bass in his high school band. There are stage kids like Dorothy Balcita from Living Hope Baptist Church, who starred in every church Christmas musical. Then there are those who have dedicated their lives to music. Melissa Raimondo of Upper Room Community Church is the former member of a hard rock band in Toronto who is currently pursuing solo work. Meanwhile, Shikaina Jacob of Calvary Church interned in New York under Tony Bennett. Like any other live band, they spend Saturday evenings walking

Living Hope Toronto Worship Team (left to right): Race Arroz, Gil Garrovillo, Dorothy Balcita, Lisa Meng

Photo © Rachel Evangeline Chiong

barefoot on the carpet during rehearsals, writing set lists on the back of scrap paper, and repeating the same chorus until muscle memory takes over. But when the layers began to peel back, the differences slide into auto-focus. The corporately formatted lyric sheets, prayers before rehearsal, and projector looming overhead form the fundamental ground which sets the worship team apart from a Lee's Palace headliner.

How is it different from any other band? When I ask the worship leaders this question, 'intentionality' and 'accessibility' surface side-by-side and intertwine like held hands. Shikaina explains that there is nothing special about the music; instead, there is an overwhelming feeling of reverence and gratitude. Some could call this feeling 'worship', which is expressed in a myriad of ways, music being one of them. With the intent to worship, the team stands at a crossroads between the congregation and God. Dorothy describes how the team is given an important job to lead people; therefore, the music must be accessible. This explains the projector every morning, which flashes lyrics in six-inch Arial font. It explains why the music rarely wanders far off into the cacophonic experimental ether. The lyrics not only have to be rich, but also understandable, beautiful, and easy-to-sing. It is a weekly collaborative karaoke performed for an audience of One.

Is there such thing as a worship music scene? The worship team's survival in places of religious practice is both a blessing and a self-inflicted curse. It is a testament to the underappreciated religious freedom in Toronto. However, when I ask the worship leaders if they consider the worship scene as integrated or apart from Toronto culture, they unanimously say that it is isolated. Despite all pretenses of welcome, if you have no intention of being in a church, there is no reason why you would ever find yourself in one. Melissa has engaged with music for her whole life, but only discovered the 'worship genre' at 24 when she actively searched for a way to fuse her new faith and love for songwriting. Bridging these spaces is no easy task, especially since collaboration is the key. No matter how 'worshipful' the band performs, if the audience focuses on themselves or the stage, but not God, then a worship team will dissolve into another inspirational light-rock cover band.

But what does it feel like? The passion that the worship team leads is intensely personal and drastically nuanced in a way that I have never encountered in any other musical settings. People identify with music so closely that it is no wonder that the worship team became a deeply integrated system in church life. Shawn recounts how even after disappointing sets, hearing people express their appreciation reminds him that the ultimate goal is to direct everyone's attention to the forgiveness and love that brings them together. All things considered, being on the worship team—whether you're a singer, bassist, drummer, or anything else— bags both musicianship and identity in one cumbersomely, complicated wrapped package.

I grew up experiencing this every week. It wasn't until university, when I was exposed to the overwhelming magic of Toronto's local music, that my fate began to change course. Merging these worlds within a thousand words is nerve-wracking, more than showing a friend your favourite song and less than inviting a potential lover to a family dinner. The reason why I chose those particular people as my interviewees is not only because they are worship leaders. Rather, they complete the story that I was once too scared to tell. Their vivacity gave me the confidence to reach out to people similar to me, who are sifting through a liminal space, desperately trying to love this city's music on Friday nights and God on Sunday mornings. They are the ones with millions of questions of faith, loyalty, and curiosity, but had always been answered with vague metaphors. The ones, who despite all the doubts, are still bravely baring themselves before the blinding projector light on the first morning of every week; because, they know that doing what you love can lose its novelty, but doing because you love can last an eternity.

ISKWÉ

a discussion with up and coming alt-r&b / triphop artist IsKwé

Randa Omar

Recently playing at a Hart House Sunday Concert, IsKwé ('woman' in Cree) is a rising star in the Canadian R&B scene. IsKwé is a Winnipeg artist with Irish and Cree/Dené roots, and a part-time student at the St. George UofT campus. *Demo* sat down with her to discuss the artist's inspirations, music, and her Indigenous community.

© Photo by Lisa MacIntosh

Where do you take your inspiration from, for your music but also for your face paintings?
Well music, I get a lot of inspiration from all over the place. I grew up in a very eclectic household for music. My family is quite artistic and the arts were always encouraged so I never had lack of opportunity in that regard.
For face paintings, it's a lot to do with finding a place for creativity within myself. I come from a visual arts background and a performance background. So it was a way for me to find expression and be able to tap into that side of myself and feel stronger while performing. Since a lot of the things I talk about are fairly heavy content, it made it a little easier to have that conversation with the additional strength and support.

Do you take inspiration from other Indigenous artists of different mediums?
Of course. I am a big fan of Kent Moneyman, number one. He's a visual artist and his paintings are incredible, but I think pulling inspiration from all of the platforms and all of the mediums are equally important. I read a lot of Indigenous literature, I listen to a lot of Indigenous music, theatre, whatnot. I mean it's a big part of my community.

You've worked on a graphic novel called "Will I See?" How did you enjoy the process? Would you like to do it again?
Yeah, of course. It was a fluke, how it came to be. I was talking to a friend of mine, David Robertson, who is an author in Winnipeg. I was telling him how I was working with my cousin on this idea for a music video. After I saw him use an image from one of his other graphic novels and create a moving story that they were using to promote that book, I thought, *Oh! That's exactly the kind of thing I'd like to see for the music video that I had in mind.* So I shared with him the concept of the storyline and from there we developed the story. Unlike a novel, or a big piece of writing, it took a lot of time, focus, energy, and back and forth, but it really showed me how extensive the process is in creating graphic novels, and any kind of publication. I would love to do it again.

You were a ballerina before focusing on music. Do you think your dance education or "vocabulary" has played a role in your music?
Yeah definitely. I think it plays a role in my performance but not directly in my music.

Do you see yourself ever leaving music to pursue another artistic talent?
No, I don't know what the future holds but, it's not in my immediate goals.

What do you study? Why was it important for you to pursue academics alongside working on your music?
I'm studying political theory & Indigenous studies. I've always enjoyed learning. I think that expanding and bettering ourselves is always important. I also recognize that at the end of the day, a lot of the things I talk about are politically charged, so I feel that it is important for me to always expand the platform that I speak from. Staying current in terms of the things that are happening, but also learning the backstories of how politics came to be builds on my overall understanding.

Why did you chose to move to Toronto? Was it for the music industry, or for your education?
I came to Toronto for music. I didn't grow up in the music scene in Winnipeg, so I didn't know how to place myself in it. It made sense for me to come to Toronto, especially because of the style of music that I was creating.

Do you ever restrict your tunes to the genre we know you by, or do you let your inspirations and what you're feeling determine your music?
I definitely don't allow genre to be a part of it anymore. Songs are always evolving and changing. I like to create the music then try and decide what the genre will be after its done.

Do you feel a certain pressure about the way your music will be received, because of the role it plays in representing and fighting for Indigenous people, and more specifically, women?
I think it can be kind of loaded. I think there's going to be two types of listeners: one that enjoys, appreciates, and encourages the type of music and content I produce, and the things that I talk about. The other type of listener is someone who either isn't aware or isn't interested, or who still feels threatened anytime someone speaks out or feels uncomfortable. I think there's room for all of the above.
A lot of change comes from uncomfortable situations and conversations, and I recognize it's a part of what I do. It can be challenging, it can be frustrating, it can be draining - it can be all of those things. I don't like to associate with any kind of pressure or responsibility or anything like that. I feel like as an Indigenous people, we get categorized with those words quite frequently in terms of it being our responsibility to make changes. I don't believe that this is accurate. I'm going to put those words out there and just acknowledge that there are challenges that arise when speaking about such loaded content, and that's just a part of it. It comes with a lot of sensation, positive feelings, and negative feelings. Change happens when we feel uncomfortable by some sort of friction.

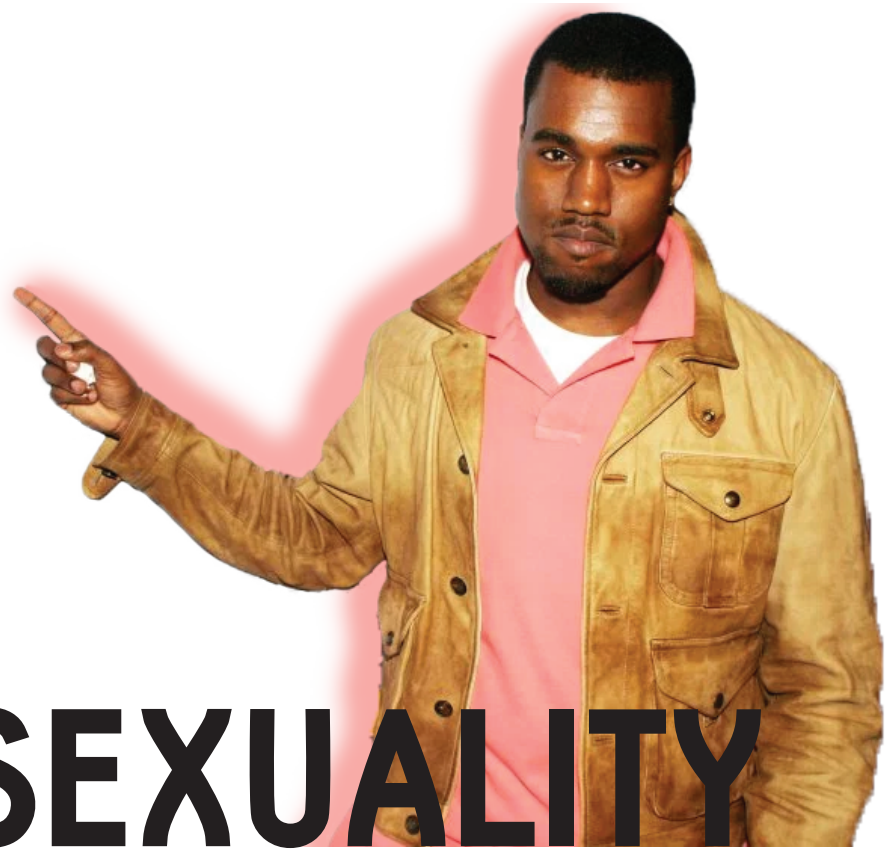
> "I'm going to put those words out there and just acknowledge that there are challenges that arise when speaking about such loaded content, and that's just a part of it."

Journalist Emmanuelle Walter was incredibly shocked when she learned about the disappearing Indigenous women and how little the cases were documented and investigated. This led to her book, "Stolen Sisters: The Story of Two Missing Girls, Their Families, and How Canada Has Failed Indigenous Women." As an Indigenous woman yourself, was this a matter you grew up hearing about or warned about? Or were you just as shocked to learn about it later on?
I have no point of reference for when I started to know about it. I have no clue. I think in our communities, we just always understood that we are not viewed as equals in society and that comes with these different conversations. I don't ever remember having a specific conversation that let me know what was going on, but I don't ever remember having a moment where I thought, *What the heck, this is brand new information.*

What's next for you? Do you have an end goal, or do you just "go with the flow"?
I'm going to keep the music going. I have no end goal, but I make smaller goals every time I do something new so that I can keep bettering my craft, my art, my business, and my career. In terms of one big magic goal at the end of the rainbow, I haven't created that idea yet.

Edited and condensed for publication.

HIP HOP AND HOMOSEXUALITY



© Photo by Johnny Nunez

How attitudes towards non-heterosexuality have changed in hip-hop

Jeffrey Leung

Trigger Warning: Homophobic Slurs

Hip-hop, while one of the most popular modes of music, is not known to be a tolerant form of artistic expression. The genre has a checkered past with certain issues, especially sexuality and gender identity. Today, transphobia and homophobia are constantly used as weapons by more aggressive rappers in diss tracks or rap battles. In the most popular battle rap leagues like King of the Dot (KOTD) or Ultimate Rap League (URL), these lines are not only tolerated but encouraged, with popular battle rappers like Dizaster calling his opponent a "f*ckin' f*ggot". The following is a selected history of the rather strained and controversial relationship between hip-hop and non-heteronormative identity.

Dating back to the 1990s-early 2000s era of rap, many mainstream artists, most notably Eminem, incurred a storm of controversy over homophobic and transphobic lyrics. In "Criminal", Eminem states "whether you're a f*g or les'/Or the homosex, hermaph' or a trans'-a-'vest'/Pants or dress, hate f*gs? The answer's yes." Obviously, this sparked outrage within the LGBT community. Many went so far as to protest his music outside the 43rd Grammy Awards ceremony where the rapper was slated to perform. While it can be argued that this example is either overblown tongue-in-cheek humour or playing a character for the sake of entertainment—Eminem has said on multiple occasions that not only should his

musical persona of "Slim Shady" be kept separate from his personal views, but that he supports gay rights and marriage, something he was adamant about in a 2010 interview with the New York Times— it is undeniable that an undercurrent of homophobia/transphobia is more present in hip-hop than many other musical genres.

A more serious example would be DMX's track "Where The Hood At", in which he throws out lines like:"I show no love to, homo thugs/ How you gonna explain f*ckin' a man?/... I don't f*ck with n*ggas that think they broads". Despite the homophobia and transphobia on display, the song reached number 68 on the Billboard charts without much controversy. In addition, DMX's status as a mainstream rapper at the time reflects upon the industry's relationship with the hateful language. That being said, as rap became more mainstream, vulnerability and what would be perceived as 'feminine' traits in men became more acceptable. A notable turning point in this trend was the explosive popularity of Kanye West.

Arsh Bains touches on this factor in his 36 Chapters article entitled "Why Kanye West is the Most Influential Artist of his Generation." Kanye was an anomaly when he first entered the scene. Rather than wear big chains or baggy monochrome outfits, he went to events dressed in a pink polo. Rather than brag about his guns or his reputation on the streets, he admitted that he was not a gangster and never aspired to be. He bragged about his money and fame, yes, but he did so in a self-aware and often tongue-in-cheek manner, sometimes creating personal songs in which he berated and criticized himself for his ego. His emergence, alongside other artists like Outkast, marked a shift in rap to a more tolerant era of hip-hop. His *808s & Heartbreak* was full of vulnerable ballads that pushed the limits of the genre. This paved the way for Drake and the Weeknd to make softer music that explored their insecurities and vulnerabilities while still remaining popular. With the higher acceptance of "feminine" rappers and artists in the hip-hop community as well as various social shifts, it is no surprise that some of the more popular rap and hip-hop artists have come out as gay or bisexual. Some notable examples include iLoveMakonnen and Frank Ocean, the latter of whom stated that he "felt like a free man" in a Tumblr post.

However, one of the biggest surprises of hip-hop's progressive evolution was Tyler the Creator's newest album, *Flower Boy* (originally stylized as *Scum Fuck Flower Boy*). Tyler has constantly come under fire for his supposed homophobia with lyrics like "Whoa yo, yo.. no homo, I'm not gay, f*ggot" off "AssMilk". Yet, on *Flower Boy*, he freely talks about sexuality. On "I Ain't Got Time!", he even brags "I've been kissing white boys since 2004" and states in "Garden Shed", "...garden shed/For the garden/ That is where I was hidin'/ That was real love I was in." Although Tyler has not confirmed these interpretations, certain themes are present in his lyrics. These songs reflect the ongoing normalization of homosexuality within hip-hop culture. Another example of a rapper unafraid to discuss his homosexuality would be Kevin Abstract of the group Brockhampton. In "JUNKY", he openly expresses his sexual pride and taunts any people that disagree.

AS RAP BECAME MORE MAINSTREAM, VULNERABILITY AND WHAT WOULD BE PERCEIVED AS 'FEMININE' TRAITS IN MEN BECAME MORE ACCEPTABLE.

These examples reflect the changing attitudes of the hip-hop community from the early 2000s to 2017. While some rappers remain less than tolerant, notably Action Bronson and his recent post of a drunk "transvestite", the rap community has made some great progress. Various other factors should be considered when discussing sexuality and gender identity within the hip-hop genre. Social environments remain a key influence on an artist's work, and as the world continues to embrace non-heteronormativity the music will continue to reflect it.

ONTARIO IS FOR SCREAMO

A GUIDE TO SCRAMZ IN THE GTA

GRACE GUIMOND

"Screamo" is one of music's most misunderstood and misinterpreted genres. The general public perception of screamo lumps it in with mid-2000's mallcore or radio-friendly emo-pop bands like My Chemical Romance, but this is far from accurate. At its core, screamo music is an offshoot of hardcore punk that with less guttural vocals, chaotic dissonance, and agonizingly melodic riffs. It *is* order in chaos - hardcore music minus that genre's toxic masculinity - and finds order in chaos: if you're too soft for hardcore and too hard for emo, you'll probably find what you're looking for in screamo.

Canada is no stranger to screamo. Since the genre's inception, there's been a been steady handful of skramz bands, including some of the most recognizable names in emo and hardcore such as Quebec's One Eyed God Prophecy, Ontario's Shotmaker, and British Columbia's After School Knife Fight. As the most heavily populated province in Canada, Ontario has been central to the Canadian screamo scene. The province's emo and hardcore acts such as alexisonfire, Silverstein, and moneen helped to pave the way for the province's later bands, such as the chronically underrated Van Johnson, one of the most cherished screamo acts to ever come out of Canada, let alone Ontario. Comparatively, the Montreal and Vancouver screamo scenes are much smaller, and neither is as well-established as the Ontario scenes - particularly the Toronto one. To say the least, it's clear that Ontario has an unmatched thirst for screamy, sad shit. But why is Ontario's - and particularly Toronto's - screamo scene thriving while those in other provinces remain underdeveloped?

First of all, the GTA's density provides an array of live performance opportunities that other regions simply cannot. We have no difficulty in attracting bands from smaller cities like Mississauga, Hamilton, and Brampton, who can easily book and play shows at an array of local DIY spaces. Conversely, Toronto bands can easily travel to suburban satellites to play house shows that would get shut down if they were in the city's core. The Ontario scene is also young and driven. There's an ever-revolving door of new bands, new splits, and new friends–– and most of the bands and their fans are millennials. They're not burnt-out metalheads, they're putting fresh energy into the scene and it shows in the energy. And last, Ontario's screamo scene is so small that none of the artists can really afford to assholes, especially when audiences are paying to see them scream about being dumped by their exes. Or maybe it's because people who listen to screamo music are inherently softer, kinder, more sensitive than your typical powerviolence punx. Or maybe it's because we're all too damn sad and anxious to make the extra effort to be mean, but the Ontario screamo community is really that, for what it's worth: a community.

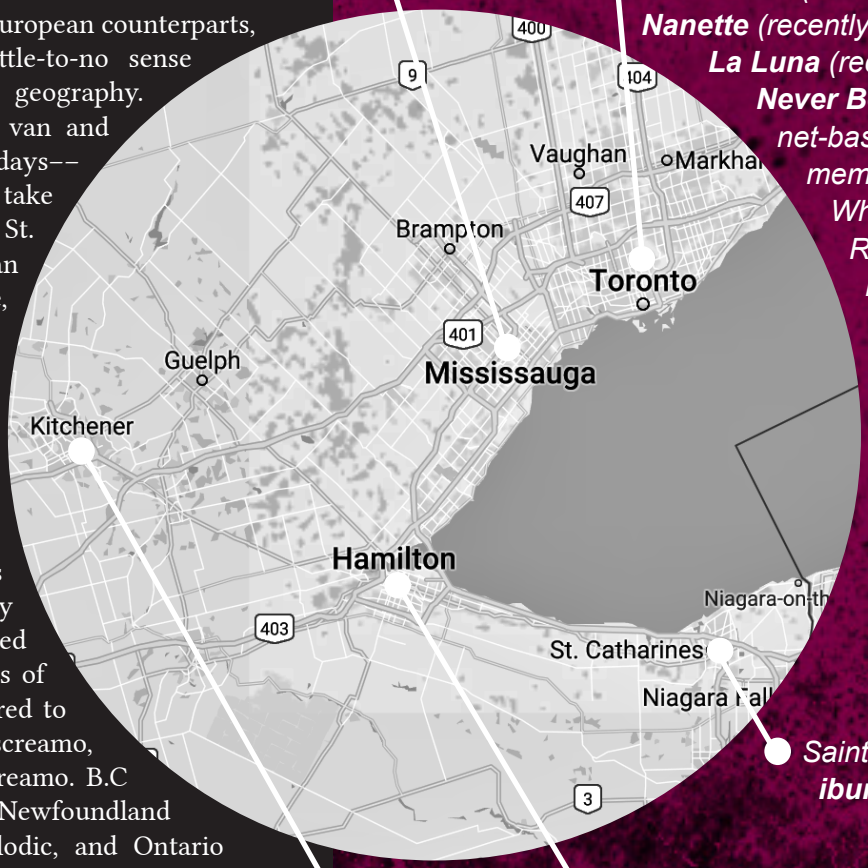
For a word that gets thrown around whenever any sort DIY scene is brought up, Ontario screamo is unique. Less pretentious than hardcore shows, less bro-y than metal shows, and less cliquey than rock n' roll shows, those of us into the generally aggro and abrasive have made a home in screamo. This past June, I found myself packed into a sweaty, tiny vegan cafe surrounded by folks from all over Ontario, the rest of Canada, and the States, screaming at the top of their lungs for 3 days while everyone else cried. Zegema Beach Records fest

was a one-shot weekend long celebration of the DIY screamo scene, a commemoration of overflowing emotion; smashing guitars & stage lights; radical self care through radical self loathing & immolation and showing what can happen when hopelessness becomes catharized into passionate, rage, and self-expression. For a relatively-inaccessible genre, Ontario screamo scene is ostensibly receptive towards newcomers. Compared to the cliquey crowd F/V or aging metalheads at Coalition, Toronto's subterranean screamo shows practically have a buddy bench. Maybe because the scene is so small that none can really afford to be an asshole, especially not to folks spending the equivalent of a cheap 6-er to see you scream into a mic about being dumped, again.

Unlike its American and European counterparts, Canada's screamo scene has little-to-no sense of national unity, mostly due to geography. European bands can hop into a van and drive across 10 countries in 10 days–– about the amount of time it would take to drive from Vancouver, B.C to St. John's, Newfoundland. American bands also have it easier tour-wise, driving a few hours across state lines to play shows, especially in the emo-dense midwest. Provinces may have strong local scenes, but they're too far apart to be truly interconnected. Bands don't tour coast-to-coast here, meaning less opportunity for bands from different parts of the country to hear each other play, get inspired and influenced, and so there's less of a cohesive national sound compared to the way people talk about Italian screamo, Swedish Screamo, or Japanese screamo. B.C screamo is spastic and sassy, Newfoundland screamo is softer and more melodic, and Ontario screamo generally tends to fall somewhere in the middle. Ontario screamo tends to be more melodic and accessible than its American counterparts. Drawing on the atmospheric tendencies of European screamo: very melodic, little distortion combined with the harsh vocals, and combining it with the reverb of American screamo.

Ontario's small towns are grey, miserable, isolating, and cold as shit in winter, but when kids have nothing to do, they'll play music, and a select few will actually be good at it. Like most provinces, Ontario has a lot of small suburban and rural towns. Our winters are grey, desolate, miserable, isolating, and cold as shit. Putting the problematic underpinnings of environmental determinism temporarily aside, Ontario's icy blue winters make icy blue hearts (and smiles), and equally depressing music.

CURRENTLY ACTIVE ONTARIO SCREAMO BANDS



Missisauga
Terry Green
Huge Cosmic

Toronto:
Respire
And Always *(members of Respire)*
Foxmoulder *(recently defunct)*
Nanette *(recently defunct)*
La Luna *(recently defunct)*
Never Better *(internet-based project, members of La Luna, What Of Us, Coma Regalia)*
Fraera
Life in Vacuum
Stresser
Digest

Saint Catherines:
iburiedyourflowers

Hamilton:
The World That Summer
Wimp City
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Kitchener:
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IMAGE VS CONTENT

THE LISTENERS' DEVELOPING ROLE IN SUCCESSFUL MUSIC

EMMA WITTMANN

© Illustrations by Jennifer Wan

You're more likely to strike up a conversation about obscure underground artists or musicians personal lives than in previous music eras. The volume of music in circulation has been a major factor in this. It is now easier to be a published musician than any time before. Advances in technology, new music platforms, and social media has resulted in the more music distribution. Accessibility of various music genres across the globe has proven audiences in the twenty-first century have power in the industry.

New music platforms, like digitally stored music and streaming, are the biggest game-changers in the industry. Consequently, physical music sales revenue have been continuously declining. Revenues decreased last year by 7.6%, which is higher than the usual decline. As of 2016, *ifpi.org* says that 50% of the recording industry's revenues was from digital sales and only 34% was from physical sales. *Huffington Post* says this because, unlike music stores, iTunes has unlimited shelf space and potential inventory is infinite. Music pirating pushed music distributors to branch out and create new streaming platforms. *Ifpi.org* adds that streaming revenues prove to be significant as they have increased by 60.4% in 2016. These online music streaming services, like SoundCloud, Bandcamp, Spotify, and Apple Music, have dramatically changed the radio's influence on popular music and record labels' place regarding the way music is sold. Kids are turning to their phones to listen to music rather than turning on the radio.

In the twentieth century, record labels were an integral part of the publishing process serving as the only connection between musicians and their distributors, which gave them exclusive decision-making power of what music was released, according to *Huffington Post*. This generation can take a hands-on approach with available production and distribution tools at their disposal, which gives them the choice of whether they want to partner with corporate labels who book them studio time and release their music or take a DIY approach. Jeff Price said in his *Huffington Post* Article, "For the past century, artists could record, manufacture, market, and, to some degree, promote their own music, but no matter if they were The Beatles, Elvis or Led Zeppelin, they could not distribute it and get in placed on the shelves of the stores across the country; the required costs and infrastructure of the physical world were just too massive". As the President/GM/Co-founder at spinART Records and his significant roles in other large music-centered endeavors, Price's insight is educated and valuable. Young musicians today are recording music in their basements and publishing it on Bandcamp, Spotify, or multiple other platforms. These online platforms may have more popularity for artists to distribute themselves, not only for ease, but also for their own creative liberty as streaming has less censorship.

With the advance in technology that led to more artists' music being distributed, listeners are exercising their freedom in choosing the music that they would like to listen to. More independent artists, groups, and collectives have been able to find success in recent years than in the twentieth century. For example, Chance the Rapper's widespread success indicates how extensively successful an artist can become without being signed to a label. Streaming has also helped in the success of musicians whose songs may be considered too slow paced, alternative, or abrasive for radio such as Lana Del Rey, Princess Nokia, or Dev Hynes, who have become extremely popular despite lack of or no airtime. Though they may not initially be played on the radio, upbeat remixes may find their way to the radio after online success. Even if popular songs don't make it to radio, artists can still have sold out shows in massive theaters because radio is not the main indicator of success in the music industry anymore.

Promotion was exclusive to TV, radio, and print, but now artists can promote via social media. It's cheap and accessible and gives musicians more control over their own promotion and image, many tailoring their online presence to appeal to internet culture. Musicians' self-promotion via social media pages and Facebook events have made a big impact on spreading the word and generating attention for shows in smaller venues. Social media has also allowed musicians to gain dedicated, interested fans. Almost every major musician has Facebook fan page. There are online groups dedicated to even the most niche music genres. These online communities allow for fans to share their interests and spread the word about other musicians cross-pollinating the online discussions.

At the same time, because it is so easily accessible, musicians now face a new pressure to maintain a presence on all social media platforms. Nowadays musicians are not starting their careers with just an instrument, but also a Bandcamp, Spotify, Soundcloud, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube account, and Instagram. This pushes bands to really maintain an image. This is comparable to the 80's when music videos became popular and artists were forced to become not just musicians, but performers. Musicians today are expected to be personalities due to social media. It seems that talented artists can be found everywhere today or even constructed with technology, but to get attention, someone also needs to have the charisma and the social media marketing skills to create a persona and identity for their sound. This is because mass audiences want to be obsessed with the artist not the art. This isn't something new, though. It can be compared to David Bowie or Madonna, who came long before social media. It seems that social media has amplified this.

> **"AN EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PERSONAS MAY DISTRACT AUDIENCES FROM THE MEDIOCRE MUSIC SOME ARTISTS RELEASE."**

An emphasis on social media personas may distract audiences from the mediocre music some artists release. The momentum from their social media success may not push the artist to assert her or her self in music, but in his or her public image. So, although it can be used as a powerful means for artists who would not otherwise have the opportunity for such publicity, others' attention may be redirected from their music to focus on their image. There were many more iconic artists in the twentieth century because they were pushed harder to make exceptional music to get recognition. Perhaps it has become too easy to get recognition in the twenty-first century, something that seemed like a valuable tool, but has become a bad thing.

Modern music audiences seem to be generally friendly though. Art collectives and small indie labels have also offered artists a support system to help them get started. It lets each artist to piggyback off the others. In a way art collectives have always been around. Friends would share each other's' art and music. Now social media aids them in banding themselves together and projecting a shared image with more clarity and fidelity. It is power in numbers. The Internet allows people to collaborate with ease without regard for distance, language, or other previous obstacles letting musicians acquire dedicated and interest fans from *Facebook* fan pages or *Reddit* strands dedicated to music genres. These groups online are spaces for fans to share their interests and spread the word about other musicians cross-pollinating the online discussions.

Independent art groups or labels are slowly removing the middleman of big corporate music labels. This gives artists more control and more protection from labels or producers that have previously taken advantage of musicians. These independent groups have started paving the way for the future of music labels, which is artist-run; driven by brand; and collaborative with other artists, events and culture according to *Forbes*. The future of music is motivated by listeners. Musicians and fans have many more resources. Whether the fans push musicians to create better music or become more well-rounded characters is uncertain. They have taken up a substantial role in if an artist is successful.

HartHouse